

## **Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)**

**Monday, April 15, 2019**

### **Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, April 15, 2019, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by AIACC Member Justin Schwartz. Also in attendance were Council members: Fred Biasini, Brooke Bowles, Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Robert Caldwell, Suzanne Dowling, Megan Everett, Erich Grommet, Heather Jones, Melanie Jones, Chris Stewart, and Karen Willis. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Beverly Churchwell on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Sabrina Franks behalf of Nancy Buckner, Nancy Thomas on behalf of Lucian Cronkite, Laurie Eldridge-Auffant on behalf of Scott Harris, Tina Sanders on behalf of Eric Mackey, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, and Dianna Tullier on behalf of Jeana Ross. Also in attendance was Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator.

The minutes from the January 28, 2019 meeting were approved and adopted.

Justin Schwartz welcomed attendees to the AIACC meeting.

Anna McConnell, on behalf of DMH, noted that stakeholder meetings were just completed for input regarding the shift to Home and Community Based Settings Rule implementation. The annual report will also be sent in the next e-news.

#### Committee and Subcommittee Updates regarding Strategic Planning:

##### *Regional Autism Networks Directors:*

Elizabeth Griffith and Dr. Richard Rector presented as Chair of the RAN Directors Committee and Chair of the RAN Constituency Board for UAB. The RAN is looking to build more capacity across the state, and not just in the university setting. Targeted activities emphasize Public Education and Professional Training, especially in rural regions of the state. They discussed partnering with existing infrastructures, such as Project ECHO. Dr. Rector noted that the advisory boards were interested in daily activities more than quarterly reports, and are looking for ways to become more involved. Activities that reached higher numbers of families and providers and allowed for Constituency Board involvement were Lunch and Learns, Coffee Talks, and various other Public Education activities. A website that housed RAN would allow for greater community access to resources

##### *Standards of Practice: Ages 0-5*

Dr. Biasini presented on behalf of Sarah O'Kelley and Kimberly Tomeny. This workgroup is currently focused on the Early Intervention population, as that system is looking to find ways to better serve those children with ASD and their families. They are also looking at issues related to transition to the school system at age 3. The group is reviewing valid and reliable screeners and how to use that information in the EI system, as well as best practices for very young children with ASD. Trainings for EI providers regarding these best practices are in the planning stages.

#### *Standards of Practice: Ages 6-13*

Dr. Jones discussed highlighted activities of the subcommittee. Proposals include greater coordination and collaboration between school systems and the RAN. More research is needed, especially in rural regions, particularly in regard to screening practices. Many children are diagnosed once they enter into the school system, but only receive an educational eligibility. This eligibility diagnosis does not warrant services outside of the school due to is not meeting medical eligibility oftentimes. For school services, however, for the Medicaid population, the Local Education Agency (LEA) Chapter allows for reimbursement for school related services.

#### *Standards of Practice: Ages 14-20*

Dr. Grommet noted that a primary focus of this group is to support transition. The data from the needs assessment showed that 50% of affluent families were not getting transition services; it can be deduced that less resourced families are receiving services at that same rate, or most likely, less.

Recommendations for participants were made, for example, ALSDE, Dept of Labor, Dept of Commerce, the Community College System, and ADRS. Health needs for this population were also discussed, as some pediatricians are not as familiar with adolescent/adult issues, and family practitioners may be the more likely health provider.

#### *Standards of Practice: Ages 21+*

In the Adult Subcommittee, the focus is not only on the family, but more how the individual handles adulthood. A primary focus is how to navigate the various systems (ABLE Accounts, Legal, waivers, resources, etc.). Dr. Ryan also noted that the group will be reviewing services in other states that would be something we could recommend be implemented in Alabama. The Health Subcommittee will be an important partner for this group, as healthcare is often lacking for this population.

#### *Standards of Practice: Diagnostics and Health*

Dr. Schwartz discussed that the group plans to go through how diagnoses are made and to identify gaps and needs in this process. In order to decrease the average age of diagnosis, and evaluation of

the current system is needed. This would include identifying the average waitlist time. For mental health services, access to healthcare is even more difficult.

#### *Standards of Practice: Training and Education*

Sonia Cleckler noted that parents needed information regarding ASD, especially in the topics of adolescence, and planning and support. This subcommittee plans to partner with other subcommittees regarding specific age groups. Finding information tends to be difficult once you go beyond individual providers, and information and training is needed at that level, as well as for self-advocates and families. This subcommittee will also look at respite opportunities for the ASD population. Training videos done in collaboration with universities might be a good way to distribute information for this subcommittee.

#### *Public Awareness:*

Melanie Jones discussed the awareness work being done through a grant from the DD Council to allow for Autism Friendly businesses that are trained in how to employ and work with individuals with ASD, and who will hire someone with ASD once completed with the program. The AAPN also needs a self-advocate to work on their website. The Alabama Partnership for Children and Strengthening Families distribute *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* materials from the CDC regarding early warning signs for ASD and is a partner organization with the AIACC and the Public Awareness Committee

The Committees and Subcommittees are asked to develop policy and funding recommendations (preferable in coordination with relevant stakeholders, if possible) in order to achieve the evidence based system of care for individuals with ASD and their families.

#### *Regional Autism Network Update:*

Dr. Doris Hill announced that the RAN and ADMH had collectively applied for a HRSA grant that would provide for Family Navigation and Provider Training around the state. Notification on recipients is pending. The RAN Constituency Boards met during the Annual RAN Conference and contributed to the development of the Strategic Plan proposal. RAN representatives participated in a number of statewide conferences, include the Child Abuse Awareness, Transition, and Family Voices conferences. RAN highlighted activities also include: meetings with juvenile court judges, teacher trainings, community education workshops, state library partnership, and adult protective services trainings.

#### *Announcements:*

Tami Waters noted a bill that could come before the state legislature that would provide a scholarship for students (similar to MS, TN, and FL). The bill would allow a student to use a voucher to attend another school system.

Brooke Bowles announced the Secret to Successful Employment training that she is working on. It is hands-on and outcome based. More information to follow.

Sarah Ryan noted that the Civitan Club is open to membership, especially to those with neurodevelopmental disorders and their extended family members. They support service projects of various kinds that provide for families affected by ASD.

Joe Carter noted that Glenwood is hosting Cathy Pratt during their annual Endowed Lecture. This year, the topic will be "Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviors."

Sabrina Franks noted that DHR is still hiring for BCBA and BCaBA positions and are on the state personnel website.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Monday, July 15, 2019

Recording Secretary

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A. McConnell